

# THE WIDOW

*Says a Man Marries "Just 'Because,"  
But a Woman, Only for Good Reasons.*

"Better that the flesh takes it easily, like butter."

"The things glinting light flashing from the deadly thing seemed to fascinate him, for he held it a long while silently. Then he spoke.

"For fifteen years I have been a hunter, with a soul like a hawk and a dismally garret peopled with bats and varmints that flap and flutter all the time. I used to figure that if I killed this man, I'd kill that memory, too, and those flitting, noiseless things would leave me, but the thought of doing it made me afraid every time, so I ran away, which never did me good—you can't outfoot a memory—and I knew all the while that we'd meet sooner or later. Now that the day is here at last, I'm not ready for it. I'd like to run away again if there was any place to run to, but I've billowed frontiers till I've seen them disappear one by one. I've retreated against the Arctic, and there isn't any more place to go to. All the time I've been armed and planned for this meeting, and yet—I'm undecided."

"Kill him!" said Altuna.

"God knows I've always hated trouble, but I've never hated this fellow. I've always wanted to die in bed, while he has been a killer all his life and the smoke hangs forever in his eyes. Only for an accident, which might have lived here all our days and never had a 'run-in,' which makes me wonder if I hadn't better let them go on as they are."

"Kill him! It is the law," repeated Altuna, stubbornly, but he put her aside with a slow shake of the head and went on.

"No, I don't think I can do it—not in cold blood, anyhow. Good-night, I'm going to bed. I'll be back to look at the door of his room, but I won't," she noted that he slipped the knife and scabbard inside the bosom of his shirt.